

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An information processing apparatus on a seller side capable of sale of electronic contents via a network, comprising:
 - 5 acquiring means for acquiring via said network information on the electronic contents that the buyer side wanting to purchase arbitrary electronic contents desires to buy; and
 - 10 first providing means for providing to said buyer side via said network the electronic contents desired to sell corresponding to the information acquired by said acquiring means.
- 15 2. The information processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said first providing means encrypts and provides said electronic contents desired to sell.
- 20 3. The information processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said first providing means provides said electronic contents desired to sell based on evaluation results of said electronic contents.
- 25 4. The information processing apparatus according to claim 3, further comprising evaluation processing means for performing an evaluation process of said electronic contents desired to sell by using software provided by said buyer side via said network,

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wherein said first providing means provides said electronic contents desired to sell based on evaluation results of said evaluation processing means.

5 5. The information processing apparatus according to claim 3, further comprising:

 converting means for converting said electronic contents desired to sell to the electronic contents for evaluation; and

10 second providing means for providing to said buyer side via said network the electronic contents for evaluation acquired by said converting means,

15 wherein said first providing means provides said electronic contents desired to sell based on results of evaluation of said electronic contents for evaluation performed on said buyer side.

6. The information processing apparatus according to claim 3, further comprising:

20 evaluation processing means for performing an evaluation process of said electronic contents desired to sell by using software provided by said buyer side via said network;

25 converting means for converting said electronic contents desired to sell to the electronic contents for evaluation based on whether or not said evaluation process by said evaluation processing means has

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normally ended; and

second providing means for providing to said buyer side via said network the electronic contents for evaluation acquired by said converting means,

5 wherein said first providing means provides said electronic contents desired to sell based on the evaluation results of said evaluation processing means or the results of evaluation of said electronic contents for evaluation performed on said buyer side.

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7. An information processing apparatus on a buyer side capable of sale of electronic contents via a network, comprising:

15 first providing means for providing to an arbitrary user on said network information on the electronic contents desired to buy via said network; and

20 first acquiring means for acquiring the electronic contents desired to sell provided by said arbitrary user in response to the information provided by said first providing means via said network.

8. The information processing apparatus according to claim 7, further comprising:

25 second providing means for providing to said arbitrary user via said network key information for encrypting said electronic contents desired to sell;

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and

decrypting means for decrypting the electronic contents encrypted by said key information,

wherein said first acquiring means acquires said 5 electronic contents desired to sell encrypted on said arbitrary user side by using said key information, and said decrypting means decrypts the encrypted electronic contents acquired by said first acquiring means.

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9. The information processing apparatus according to claim 7, further comprising third providing means for providing to said arbitrary user via said network the software for evaluating the electronic contents 15 that the user desires to sell,

wherein said first acquiring means acquires said electronic contents desired to sell provided by said arbitrary user based on the evaluation results of said electronic contents to sell by said software on said 20 arbitrary user side.

10. The information processing apparatus according to claim 7, further comprising:

second acquiring means for acquiring said 25 electronic contents desired to sell converted to the electronic contents for evaluation by said arbitrary user side; and

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fourth providing means for providing to said arbitrary user via said network the evaluation results of said electronic contents for evaluation,

wherein said first acquiring means acquires said 5 electronic contents desired to sell provided by said arbitrary user based on said evaluation results of said fourth providing means.

11. An information processing apparatus capable 10 of commercial product trade via a network, comprising:

acquiring means for at least acquiring via said network either selling information that is information on a commercial product desired to sell on the seller side or buying information that is information on a 15 commercial product desired to buy on the buyer side; and

answering means for answering whether to buy or sell as to the selling information or the buying information acquired by said acquiring means via said 20 network.

12. The information processing apparatus according to claim 11,

wherein said acquiring means acquires the 25 information managed on the broker side of commercial product sale on said network; and said answering means answers to said broker side.

13. The information processing apparatus according to claim 12, wherein said acquiring means acquires via said network the information on the brokerage of the commercial product sale occurring on
5 said broker side.

14. An electronic commerce system having a plurality of apparatuses including at least terminal units of the seller side and the buyer side connected
10 via a network in a manner capable of mutual communication,

wherein at least one of said plurality of apparatuses has functions of the information processing apparatus according to claim 1.
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15. An electronic commerce system for conducting sale of electronic contents between the seller side and the buyer side via a network, comprising:

a terminal unit on the seller side capable of
20 activating information acquiring and browsing software;
a terminal unit on the buyer side;
a server unit managed and operated by said buyer side for at least managing either the information on the electronic contents desired to purchase on said
25 buyer side or personal information on said seller side, sending and receiving data files according to a request by the information acquiring and browsing software on

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said seller side, and having a data storage area opened to said buyer side for receiving the electronic contents sent from said seller side;

5 a terminal unit on a financial institution side for performing a transfer transaction to said seller side according to a request from said buyer side; and
 a communication network for connecting in a manner capable of communication said terminal unit on the seller side, said terminal unit on the buyer side, said 10 server unit and said terminal unit on the financial institution side.

16. The electronic commerce system according to claim 15, wherein said server unit has at least server 15 functions of either an HTTP (Hyper Text Transfer Protocol) server or an FTP (File Transfer Protocol) server, performs services according to a request from said information acquiring and browsing software and returns results thereof as predetermined data file, and 20 also receives the electronic contents sent from said seller side.

17. An electronic commerce system for trading an arbitrary commercial product between a seller side and 25 a buyer side via a network, comprising:

 a terminal unit on the seller side capable of activating information acquiring and browsing software;

a terminal unit on the buyer side capable of activating the information acquiring and browsing software;

5 a terminal unit on the commercial product sale broker side;

a server unit managed and operated by said broker side;

10 a distributor side for at least conducting either distribution of the commercial product or receipt of a price of the commercial product according to a request by said broker; and

15 a communication network for connecting in a manner capable of communication at least one of said terminal unit on the seller side, said terminal unit on the buyer side, said terminal unit on the broker side, said server unit and said terminal unit on the distributor side.

18. The electronic commerce system according to
20 claim 17, wherein said server unit has at least the functions of either the HTTP (Hyper Text Transfer Protocol) server or the FTP (File Transfer Protocol) server, performs the services according to a request from said information acquiring and browsing software
25 and returns the results thereof as a data file, and also provides the e-mail services, stores and updates information including the commercial product sale

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brokerage information and the distribution schedule information of said distributor side at any time.

19. An electronic commerce system for trading an
5 arbitrary commercial product between a seller side and
a buyer side via a network, comprising:

a terminal unit on the seller side capable of
activating information acquiring and browsing software;

10 a terminal unit on the buyer side capable of
activating the information acquiring and browsing
software;

a terminal unit on the commercial product sale
broker side;

15 a server unit managed and operated by said broker
side; and

a communication network for connecting in a manner
capable of communication at least one of said terminal
unit on the seller side, said terminal unit on the
buyer side, said terminal unit on the broker side and
20 said server unit.

20. The electronic commerce system according to
claim 19, wherein said server unit has at least the
functions of either the HTTP (Hyper Text Transfer
25 Protocol) server or the FTP (File Transfer Protocol)
server, performs services according to a request from
said information acquiring and browsing software and

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returns results thereof as a predetermined data file, and also provides the e-mail services, stores and updates information including the commercial product sale brokerage information at any time.

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21. The electronic commerce system according to claim 15, wherein said information acquiring and browsing software includes a WWW browser.

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22. The electronic commerce system according to claim 15, wherein said communication network includes the Internet.

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23. An electronic commerce method for trading electronic contents between a seller side and a buyer side via a network, comprising the steps that:

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said seller side uses the information acquiring and browsing software to access the server unit managed and operated by said buyer side and perform membership registration;

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said seller side acquires from said server unit on the buyer side a data file including information on the electronic contents desired to purchase on the buyer side and displays the data file by using said information acquiring and browsing software;

said seller side acquires the software required for this trade from said server unit on the buyer side;

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- said seller side evaluates the electronic contents to be provided to said buyer side by using the contents evaluation software included in said software required for this trade;
- 5 said seller side sends to said buyer side at least one of a contents number for identifying the electronic contents to be provided to said buyer side, member authentication information on said membership registration and said evaluation results;
- 10 said buyer side sends to said seller side information on at least one of an evaluated price, a reception number, key information used for encryption and electronic contents destination information for the subject electronic contents indicated by said contents number based on said evaluation results;
- 15 said seller side sends the subject electronic contents encrypted by using said encryption key to said buyer side in the case of being convinced of said evaluated price; and
- 20 said buyer side checks the subject electronic contents sent from said seller side and then requests the financial institution to transfer the amount of said evaluated price to said seller side for payment via said network.
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24. The electronic commerce method according to claim 23, wherein said software required for this trade

includes at least one of said contents evaluation software and the encryption software.

25. The electronic commerce method according to
5 claim 23, wherein output values of the results of evaluation by said seller side using the contents evaluation software include a step of performing a process for preventing said seller side from estimating the evaluated price from the output values.

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26. The electronic commerce method according to claim 25, further comprising a step of encrypting said output values.

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27. An electronic commerce method for trading electronic contents between a seller side and a buyer side via a network, comprising the steps that:

20 said seller side uses the information acquiring and browsing software to access the server unit managed and operated by said buyer side and perform membership registration;

25 said seller side acquires from the server unit on said buyer side a data file including information on the electronic contents desired to purchase on said buyer side and displays the data file by using said information acquiring and browsing software;

said seller side acquires the software required

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for this trade from the server unit on said buyer side; said seller side uses contents conversion software included in said software required for this trade to degrade the electronic contents to be provided to said 5 buyer side and sends the degraded electronic contents as the electronic contents for evaluation to said buyer side;

said server unit on the buyer side sends to said seller side the reception number for the electronic 10 contents sent from said seller side;

said buyer side evaluates the electronic contents for evaluation sent from said seller side;

said buyer side sends said evaluation results together with said reception number to said seller 15 side;

said seller side encrypts and sends to said buyer side the subject electronic contents indicated by said reception number when convinced of said evaluation results; and

20 said buyer side checks the subject electronic contents sent from said seller side and then requests a financial institution via said network to transfer the amount of the evaluated price indicated by said evaluation results to said seller side for payment.

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28. The electronic commerce method according to claim 27, wherein said software required for this trade

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includes at least one of said contents conversion software and encryption software.

29. The electronic commerce method according to
5 claim 27, wherein the processing method that said seller side uses the contents conversion software to degrade the electronic contents includes a method principle-wise rendered incapable of restoring the original electronic contents.

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30. A storage medium, wherein the processing steps of the electronic commerce method according to claim 23 are stored by a computer in a readable manner.

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31. A program describing the processing steps of the electronic commerce method according to claim 23 in a form executable by a computer.

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32. A storage medium, wherein the processing steps of the electronic commerce method according to claim 27 are stored by a computer in a readable manner.

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33. A program describing the processing steps of the electronic commerce method according to claim 27 in a form executable by a computer.

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